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To
E. T.

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H. T.

I

I REMEMBER so well that very first meeting. We lived then in a little new villa in a row, in a new road quite near Wandsworth Common. The front room was the dining-room, and the piano was there; the back room at the end of the passage looking on to the tiny garden, which was kept full of flowers, was my father's study. This was lined with books, and in the middle of the room was his knee-hole writing-table. On the table were scattered papers, his tin of Three Castles cigarettes, and his small tumbler of weak whisky and water. As a child I used to marvel at the way he puffed the smoke out of his mouth after sipping his whisky and water. He smoked and sipped all day, while he wrote with his thin, delicate hand in his small, thick writing, or lay on the sofa by the window

reading the three-volume novels which he reviewed for part of his living. My father had a name as an essayist and critic among a small public, but he had to eke out his means with reviewing and journalism, and we had just moved from Liverpool to London so that he could be more in touch with literary affairs.

Our house was comfortable and pleasant and very cosy, with people always coming and going. My mother and father were both very sociable and hospitable, and, though there cannot have been much money, owing to my mother's wonderful management there was always everything we wanted, and the unexpected guests who often turned up were warmly welcomed. My father's study was the general sitting-room, and here all visitors were invited. Nothing disturbed my father at his work so much as to be left alone. Often when my mother thought we were getting too noisy for him, we would creep out unnoticed by him into the dining-room, but in a few minutes we would hear his strange halting step in the

passage, and his voice asking why we had left him, and back we would all have to troop, to read aloud, play games, talk and laugh, while he wrote an essay or reviewed a book.

Our life was very happy, very social, very united. We were unconventional, though in no startling way—just informal and unselfconscious. A good deal of freedom of movement was allowed to us children, and freedom of speech and thought; and so far we had all pulled together, interested in new movements—"well up in things," I think we should have said—mainly artistic and especially of course literary—and with wide views on religious and social questions. I think we were rather typical Unitarians—the denomination to which my father belonged—except that we were poorer than most Unitarians, and that as our income was very irregular our ways were not so bound by the conventions that seem to be set up by a regular flow of money. By the well-to-do of our type we should have been called Bohemians.

I think at this time we were all at home: that is, my eldest sister Ruth; myself, seventeen and just left school; and my youngest sister, Carrie, still at school. Both my sisters were clever, and had carried everything before them at school. I hated school, where my sisters' brilliance threw into sharp relief my own incapacity, and I had begged to leave and be at home with my father, whom I adored.

I remember that afternoon. We knew the strange boy was coming. Our Unitarian minister had asked my father to look at some of his work and see if it was any good, and father had thought so highly of it that we had already nicknamed the boy "The Genius." Perhaps we had been told he was shy; anyway we left the study and went into the dining-room, and when he came he was shown straight in to father, who was waiting for him. We girls were playing the *Mikado* on the piano and singing, and between whiles laughing and talking of the boy and wondering what he would be like, and I think feeling a slight, amused prejudice against him for being shy and serious and

clever. Soon, when we thought father had had enough of him to himself, we thought we should like to see him, but my two sisters drew back at the door; so I went in alone. I opened the door, feeling silly, and giggling, because of the rather extravagant things we had been saying about him; and just inside the door, standing by the bookshelves with an open book in his hand, he stood, so that I came upon him sooner than I had expected. This made me laugh the more, or feel inclined to laugh, had not his face, into which I looked, immediately changed my mood. My father introduced us and our eyes met—the boy's solemn grey eyes rather overshadowed by drooping lids with long lashes. He did not smile, but looked very steadily at me and I at him as he took my hand with a very hard and long grip. I remember feeling pleasure in that first touch and thinking "I like him; I like the way he shakes hands and the straight, intense look in his eyes." After I came in, the talk lagged, my father doing his best to keep things going, but David was too shy and constrained by my

presence to be able to talk. And soon he went, refusing to stay to tea to meet my sisters. I can't remember if he dwelt much in my thoughts after the first meeting, but I do remember that though I thought him shy and awkward and silent I liked him and wanted to see him again.

David was tall—just six feet—and slim, with a broad chest and shoulders, which he carried well—loose-limbed and athletic. He had a beautifully shaped head with a fine brow, and his thick fair hair, worn rather long, curled a little over his forehead and ears. His nose was long and straight, his mouth very sensitive, with the upper lip slightly overhanging the lower. The chin was strong. The eyes were grey and dreamy and meditative, but fearless and steady, and as if trying to pierce to truth itself. It was a most striking face, recalling a portrait of Shelley in its sensitive, melancholy beauty. His hands were large and powerful, and he could do anything with them from the roughest work to the most delicate: they symbolize for me his strength and his tenderness. It is

his hands even more than his beautiful face that remain in my vision when I think of him; I shall never forget them.

He came often, and always father liked to have him alone, but shortly before he went I used to slip in and try to talk to him. I have no recollection of how we got on, but I think not very well, because his shyness made me shy.

My father helped him a great deal with advice about writing and reading, and with father he got on well and talked well, whose genial kindness and interest slowly broke down David's reserve. My father became very fond of him and used to call him Phil, because his first name was Philip, and my parents had had a little boy called Philip who had died as a baby, and by a strange coincidence David's features and general colouring were very like this baby boy's, and I believe my father felt that this was his boy—the boy of his heart, loving the things he loved, and seeking self-expression in the same way that my father had sought it. My mother, on the other hand,

grew to dislike him. She was jealous. She could find in this quiet, reserved, clever boy no point of contact, though as a rule she got on splendidly with boys, and preferred them to girls, and many came to the house, but none like this one. The boys she liked were jolly, frank, well-mannered, easy creatures, intelligent enough most of them, though hardly ever speaking seriously of things, but genial and cheery, and who found her a very congenial hostess.

At this time David talked almost exclusively of the books he was reading—buying when he could, or borrowing from my father—and my appearance in the study stopped all talk except what could be dragged out of him by questions. I do not want to give the impression that his manners were those of a hobbledehoy, for though he was very shy and reserved, he had a natural courtesy and distinction of manner, which, though perhaps stiff for a boy of his age, was always dignified.

His writing was devoted almost entirely to descriptions of nature, of clouds, sky,

trees and landscapes, and I had read and liked very much some of his essays. My father got several of them accepted by a weekly paper of which he was then co-editor, and the *Globe* printed some, and father was encouraging him all he could with appreciation and advice and help. This period is a little vague to me, for I was outside it and was conscious of no attraction towards him beyond the impression, still very distinct, made by that first surprisingly firm grip, and that straight look, which made me patient with his silence, his shyness and his awkwardness.

I had always had a strong yearning for the country. Our life had been spent in towns in the North of England, and owing to my father's invalidism we were not, as so many children are, taken out long walks by our father, and our times in the country had been confined to our summer holidays in North Wales. But I loved the country, and David's knowledge of country things gave us a common interest and subject of conversation, so that slowly we got to easier—

though even now not very easy terms—until one day my father said to David: "Here's Jenny dying for the country, and a good walker; why don't you take her, and show her some of the places you know?"

Before this happened we had moved to a much bigger and nicer house in a better neighbourhood. It had a very pretty garden, which had been part of an orchard, and had several fruit trees in it—one, a very beautiful old cherry tree, always lovely to look at, and full of fruit in the season. A forked branch made a comfortable seat, and I often sat up there reading, and I remember how David once found me, with bare feet and legs, eating cherries and reading, and his surprise and pleasure at finding me unembarrassed by his seeing me like that. The study in this house had French windows opening on to the garden, and so in summer time the garden became our general gathering-place, and the cherry tree's branches provided seats for several of the company. It was from this house that we set off for our first walk to Merton.

Merton was then a pretty rural place, with fields and lanes and foothpaths and woods. We walked to it through a wilderness of mean streets, and I can't remember that we talked much. Now it was I who was shy, and conscious of my intellectual inferiority, and I tried to talk "up" to him, and became more self-conscious and said stupid things. But it was on this first walk that I spoke of the picture of a titmouse in a natural history which David had showed me some time before. It was a coloured illustration, and I could not believe that the colours were natural, and that such a lovely bright bird was really a common English, even London, bird. My short sight and lack of observation made me ignorant of even the most commonly known facts of natural history, and this picture impressed me very much, and I told David as we went along how I had dreamt of a titmouse, only it was gigantic in size, and the colours of its plumage very, very vivid. He was delighted and amused at this, and this simple incident put us quite at ease with each other. We spoke

of poetry, too, of Wordsworth particularly. I told him I didn't care for him because he was "sentimental," which shocked David, and made me feel ashamed. Afterwards, when I got home, I read some of the poems he had spoken about, and from that talk my appreciation of poetry began.

I remember in that first walk how we scrambled about in a little roadside copse. It must have been winter or early spring, for the trees were bare, and David showed me many old nests, telling me the names of the birds which had made them, and pointing out to me their special characteristics. Later on he brought me as a present a most beautifully compact, moss-covered nest of a chaffinch, which I could hardly believe was the work of a bird, and all my wonder pleased and amused him in his grave way. In that copse were many burdocks, and I remember asking him to throw some of the burrs on to my skirt, so that I could prove to my people I had really been into the country.

I enjoyed that walk. It was an utterly new experience for me. Everything was new—

the very exercise which I found so delightful was new; the country so near home; my companion, the first boy I had ever been on such terms with. And all his knowledge of everything we saw, and all his intimacy —everything lifted me at once into a new world.

I was at this time about eighteen, and he nine months younger.

We came back to tea in the dusk of the evening, very happy together, and with very much of our former constraint worn away. But even now I felt he was " The Genius " and I a very ordinary girl, as indeed I was.

After that he came and went, talking with my father, and more now with me, and accepted by my mother in a grudging way. In a little while we had arranged to go another walk, and my father was delighted with the success of his idea.

This time we were to take the train to Barnes, and walk up Priory Lane and over Richmond Park to the heronry where once at night David had climbed to get a heron's

egg. I remember the place, which was near a big lake, and the tall trees (were they Scotch pines, or elms?) in which the huge, untidy, insecure nests were built, looking more like rafts of twigs than nests. I, with my dizzy head, could not endure it when he—to show me his prowess, I expect—began to climb the straight tall trunk of one of them.

He told me of his fishing exploits, and of the big pike he had caught in the pond near-by, for he was always a keen fisherman, and we spoke of Isaac Walton whom I had read. I learnt here the names of several wild flowers, especially the little low-growing kinds—tormentil was one: I have never forgotten it, and its tiny bright flower always brings back to me Richmond Park, and that day. He found me a good walker; I did not get tired, nor lag behind, but stepped out eagerly and joyfully always.

Of these walks we took many, but only one other is clearly recalled to my memory. We went again to Merton, and talked of Shelley, whom we were both reading and both very full of. His life I knew very well,

and he had for long been a hero of mine. It was his love of freedom, his hatred of injustice and tyranny that I chiefly responded to, I think, but also his spiritual beauty caught up my dawning perception of poetry. That day we talked of Shelley, and David had in his pocket a pretty little volume of selected lyrics—the flapping of a book in his jacket pocket as he strode along with his long sweeping stride is one of my earliest and latest memories of David—and we read "Adonais" and the "West Wind" and "Love's Philosophy" and "Epipsychidion" together.

Coming home from Merton, not yet having left the country roads, and in the sunset-flushed mist of an autumn afternoon, as we walked side by side, silent for the most part, but deeply conscious of happiness and friendship, he took my hand, and I, full of a new wonder and a new fear, and a new something—I could not tell what, let him walk thus. When we got home he would not come in to tea, but as we said good-bye at the gate he asked me to keep the Shelley

for my own, and I took it, but did not want to, and yet could not tell why.

I was a plain girl, morbidly conscious of intellectual and physical deficiencies. I had often cried bitterly in the thought that no man could ever love me, and that my longing for children would never be satisfied. I had so persuaded myself of this that it never entered my mind as a possibility until that moment when David took my hand; and even then I did not consciously think of love; all I felt was an unrest, a fear, a thrill, perhaps also a hope.

I was very affectionate, and almost painfully grateful to people who showed me affection, but conscious of my own unworthiness and with a constant distrust of myself. I think this was partly due to the contrast to myself in my two sisters, one older and one younger. Both were clever and self-confident and admired. They both succeeded where I failed, and my mother constantly said to me when she was irritated by her ugly duckling, "Why can't you be like your sister Carrie?" and that remark

made it more and more difficult for me to attain that ideal, and I shrank further into my shell of self-distrust.

I loved all children passionately, especially young babies. I loved to see a pregnant woman—I almost adored while I envied her. I desired love, but only, at any rate consciously, in an emotional or spiritual form, for I did not comprehend physical love, and the whole thing was very mysterious to me, and my mother had always refused to discuss the subject. I yearned vaguely for freedom, for something more than this quiet home life, where my mother's word was law. I had begun to have different tastes from the others. In dress, for instance, I took to what were then called Liberty dresses, very simple and plain in line, but of beautiful colours and ornamented with embroidery. The fashions then made this style of dress conspicuous, and my sisters laughed at it, but I was getting to the priggish stage, and I am sure I thought myself superior. I wanted less furniture in my bedroom, and more air, and I read Ruskin and

Morris and became their disciple. David and I read Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and particularly *Wilhelm Meister*, which we loved, and which influenced us very much, me specially perhaps in my natural instinct for unreserve and freedom and frankness of speech.

I was at that age plain, with a round healthy face and small nose; rather serious in expression, but not entirely unattractive. I had a lot of dark brown hair, which I wore parted in the middle with long plaits wound round my head—a simple style suiting my dress and my general seriousness. I was straight and tallish, and my own well-shaped and strong and—as I think now—really lovely body gave me intense delight. I loved being without clothes, and moving about naked, and I took a pride in my health and strength. David and I read Richard Jefferies, and with delight I found the joy in one's body spoken of there as if it was right and good. For with my old distrust of myself I had wondered if the joy I felt in my body indicated some moral deficiency in me, as

my mother's teaching had been in direct opposition to what I felt so instinctively.

David and I were getting much less reserved together, and talked of anything and everything—of poetry a great deal—Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Tennyson chiefly, I think—oh, and Byron too: indeed we read all from Chaucer onwards; all was grist to the mills of our devouring minds. Also we began to speak of ourselves, our hopes, our feeling about life, our intimate thoughts and experiences.

It must have been about this time that I introduced myself to David's parents and brothers. He was the eldest of six boys. He had no sisters, and except for brief, awkward attractions for one or two girls who lived near, I was the first girl he had ever become friendly with. He knew nothing of girls; less than I of boys, for though I had never been attractive to boys—my sister Carrie taking all these honours—I had met many at home, but I had never had a friend among them.

David's father, Mr. Townsend, was a

serious-minded Liberal—a self-satisfied, hard-working and conscientious civil servant, who rose in his department quite remarkably. He was the thick-set, short, dark type of Welshman, handsome, but to me unattractive. He was a Nonconformist, and a student, with a very narrow view of life which made him an extremely unsympathetic father. All the boys except David were like their father in appearance, but not one of them like him in character. His mother was a very pretty fair-haired woman, with a sweet melancholy face, very retiring and shy and sad. David got his looks from his mother and much of his temperament, and he adored her—if such a word can be used of so reserved, so undemonstrative an affection, which never wavered. A wonderful sympathy existed between these two, both too self-conscious to give it voice, but both sure of it always. The other boys, though, were beyond her understanding, and there was a strange feeling of disharmony in that house, which, after my own united family life, depressed me whenever I went there.

I went to see Mrs. Townsend because I thought it only fair that, as my mother knew David, she should know me. I introduced myself boldly and impulsively, as I did things then. She was very kind, though shy and reserved with me; and I think liked me, anyway did not dislike me. When I returned home I told my mother about my visit, and she to my great surprise and distress was very angry. She said I had behaved in a very improper way, and that I had practically announced myself as engaged to David. I thought her attitude and her anger ridiculous, and there began in me that antagonism to my mother which on my father's death made home life unendurable to me.

After this visit I used often to go to David's home, and became well known to his father and brothers. I tried to pierce Mrs. Townsend's deep reserve, and I believe my warm, impulsive nature did achieve something. I got on very well with both Mr. and Mrs. Townsend, and felt easy and confident with them. I was a new element in the house,

being a girl, and as I was full of interest, and with a good deal of knowledge, though immature, of artistic things, Mr. Townsend liked to talk to me, and I remember, in spite of my dislike of him, I felt flattered. Mr. Townsend had a great admiration for my father, as one of the foremost literary critics of the day. Later on Mr. Townsend made the acquaintance of my father, who was a man of great charm of manner and distinction of appearance, genial and humorous and sympathetic, and very generous with all he had, material and spiritual. So under the wing of my father's reputation and personality I was made welcome at the Townsend's and blossomed out there, freed from the everlasting comparison with my sisters.

The brothers were a strange lot of rather uncouth boys: their huge appetites and rough ways amazed me. Their parents provided no social life at home for them, and at a very early age they sought their amusements elsewhere. David was the only one who had a love of nature and literature. The very house seemed to me ugly and uninteresting,

and there was only one room which had for me any character or charm, and this was David's own room—study and bedroom in one. There he kept his collection of birds' eggs and rods and fishing-tackle, and here he lived most of his indoor life reading or writing. A few photographs of pictures of Titian and Botticelli and Greek sculpture were pinned on to the walls, and there was a shelf of books—not many yet, for he had very little pocket money to spend. Here we were allowed to sit and talk and read, though his mother often asked me if I thought my mother would like it, and sometimes, because she was so uncertain that she was doing right for her boys, she would forbid us this room, and we had to be content to sit in the cold and formal little drawing-room at the back of the house.

At this time my father, who had always been delicate, began to show signs of the tuberculosis in the throat of which he died. He was not able now to see much of David, and when David came to the house my mother's dislike of him became more and

more obvious. About the same time David went away for one of his long visits to Wiltshire, where his grandmother lived, and where he could wander all day on the Downs, and tramp about the outlying country with an old vagabond from whom he had learnt much country lore, and who had first taught him how to bait a hook, and skin a mole, and shout the " view-hallo " when the hunt was out.

My mother, taking advantage of all the circumstances, forbade me to have anything more to do with David—to write to him or receive letters from him while he was away, or to see him when he returned. My father was too ill to be appealed to, and for the first time in my life I took the law into my own hands. I wrote to him secretly, and received letters from him through a school friend of his, who was a great favourite with my mother, and who came to inquire after my father and to bring my letters with him.

II

FRIENDSHIP had now become unconscious love. We wrote to each other every day, concealing nothing of our thoughts and ideas and emotions, and relating all that happened to us in our daily life, and the deeper experiences of our growing consciousness. The writing of my letters and the receiving his were to me the most wonderful experiences I had ever had. I had found the friend of my heart, and my nature, hitherto so repressed, so morbidly self-distrustful, blossomed out, and I was expressing myself easily and well, and was always brimming over with things to tell him of myself and my reading, and I gained my greatest satisfaction in his appreciation and understanding and response. During his absence in Wiltshire David sent me boxes of wild flowers, and a thrush's egg—the

first he had found. I have it still with the inscription I wrote on the lid of the box: "From my dearest friend, David Townsend, to be kept always in memory of a happy friendship."

During this time my father's illness got worse and worse, and after an operation in his throat, a few days after David's return, he died. I was alone with my mother the night before his death. We had left him for a little while in the care of the nurse, to get a little much-needed sleep, but we simply lay down on the bed in our clothes, expecting to be called at any moment. While we were alone together in the early hours of the morning, my mother, using all the advantage of our relation, and of the emotional crisis through which we were passing, and which for the while brought us together, asked me to promise to give up David's friendship. She saw more plainly than we where it was tending, and she so disliked David, and felt jealous of my growing affection for him. In the middle of a terrible discussion the nurse came to summon us

to my father, who was in his last agony, and when we got to his bedside he was dead.

I remember my mother fainting, and my running upstairs to wake my two sisters, and the feeling of loneliness and despair that I had lost such a dear friend and ally. I remember waiting for the morning to come which would bring David outside the house to ask for news, and my running out to tell him, but I cannot remember how he took it.

After my father's death life at home became very different. His genial kindness and happiness withdrawn, my mother's harshness became more pronounced. Quite frankly she showed that her daughters were a bother to her. She had to add to her small income by taking in boarders, and these young men —quite decent and nice of their kind—became as her family. All the affection and sympathy she failed to give to her daughters she gave to these strangers, and they and she lived in the happiest relations. My friendship with David when it was mentioned was always alluded to with sneers and con-

tempt. The young men took this up, and with my mother's approval did all they could to make things appear ridiculous. David never came to the house now, but though my mother had forbidden it she was powerless to prevent my meeting him, and I never hid from her that we did. We met and walked and talked, and love grew.

There was no definite moment when friendship became love, but a natural merging into love as we became closer friends. At this time we both knew that the friendship between us was the happiest thing in our lives, but we did not regard the future. We were content with the present. But I remember one evening very well. It was in the Spring and nearing David's birthday, March 31rd. We were walking on the Common, very happy, talking of what we had been reading, what doing, what thinking, walking as usual hand in hand. In a space of silence, when thought and emotion went to and fro between us too full even for speech, I felt that wonderful experience of the first stirring of desire, though at this

time it seemed half-maternal tenderness for his big, strong body, and his lovely face, and his hand holding mine, which now held his more firmly—mingled with something new and strange that I did not understand. I remember how, with that emotion flooding my being, my heart beat too fast, and my face burned, and I could have fainted with the pain and the joy of it. For it affected me as later I was affected by the first flutter of my baby in my womb.

When we reached the place for good-night I could not let him go as he had always done before, but put my hands round his head and drew it down to mine and kissed his mouth and looked close into his eyes. And he returned my kiss and my look, and then turned to go. But as I turned to go, too, he caught me in his arms and pressed me to him and kissed my mouth and my eyes and my neck; blindly and fiercely he kissed me, and I abandoned myself to him, not responding but just yielding myself to his kisses. When I was in my bed I could not sleep, but lay trembling half with fear, half with

wonder, at what I had awakened in him. I had not known that love could be like that—so fierce, so rough, so greedy.

Quite soon after my father's death my position at home became unbearable, and I left home to earn my living as a nursery governess with relatives of friends living at Broadstairs. I do not remember that this parting from David seemed terrible to us at all: we were so happy in our love, and so sure of the future. I do remember that my mother came to see me off, and that she uttered no protest and showed no surprise when David came too. So I left home for the first time in my life.

During the time that I was in Broadstairs, we wrote to each other every day. My letters were written last thing at night in the only time of my own that I had. My work filled my day. I had four young children to bathe, dress, teach (including piano and violin), take out walks, and mend for; and in the evening, when they were in bed, I was expected to play cards with Mr. and Mrs. Hayward on weekdays, and on Sundays listen patiently

while Mr. Hayward read aloud to his patient wife and me Cary's translation of Dante. How I used to long impatiently for ten o'clock to strike, for when the hour came we stopped the game or the reading! They went to bed, and I to my room to read over again the letter I had had in the morning, and to write all that my heart and mind were full of. Long letters they were—poured out of my brimming consciousness. We wrote of our daily lives, out thoughts, the books we were reading, and our emotions. We hid nothing of ourselves from each other, and we now looked forward to a life together, when it would be possible. Marriage did not enter into our plans, but just a passionate desire to be one in body as we were in spirit.

Looking back, it seems to me unbelievable that we were so ignorant of sexual love. But we were very ignorant and very innocent.

During this time at Broadstairs I was very happy teaching and playing with the children, with whom I got on very well.

Sometimes it happened that between putting the children to bed and dinner-time I was able to slip out on to the beach just below the house, and then it was my delight to run along the sand with the wind in my hair reciting aloud Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" or "Adonais." These and most of Shelley's lyrics and many of Keats's I knew by heart. I remember the exhilaration I felt in those few stolen moments as the strong salty wind snatched the words from my lips, and my breath too, and how I delighted in holding my head high and not lowering it against the speed and the strength of the wind, and how the sound of the wind and of the sea drowned the sound of my voice, and how I felt my own strength and my own place in the motion and strength and sound, for love had given me a consciousness of my own part and significance in the universe I had not dreamt I should ever know.

I had been at Broadstairs for many months and I was so inexperienced and I suppose so well, and so happy with my secret, that it

never occurred to me to ask for a holiday, and none was ever offered. The servants and the nurse all had their times off, but I never had any. However, one day David wrote to me that he was coming into Kent to Horsmonden with a friend to fish together. He had been working hard for a Civil Service Examination, and this was to be a little rest before the examination actually took place. I remember when I asked Mrs. Hayward for the day, and told her why, she said, as if so surprised to find I had any life more than her children provided for me, "Oh, I didn't know Phyllis had got a Corydon." So very early one morning I set off. I had to get up at about five, for the journey was a tiresome cross-country one. The cook, who was very kind to me, had left me breakfast laid in the schoolroom, and I remember stealing downstairs so as not to wake anyone and finding to my great joy that the weather promised to be fine. I was wearing mourning for my father, but I hated it and the idea of it. I was too poor to buy a new frock for this great day; so I had made

myself a white blouse to wear with my black coat and skirt; and with a big black hat, from which I had taken the black ribbon, putting instead a coloured scarf, I made the best of myself.

I remember only vaguely the journey. What I chiefly remember is the changing smell of the air from the sharp, salty sea air to the soft earthy smell of the green country. When at last I got to Horsmonden, David was there on the platform, and in a moment we were together. We did not speak or kiss, but when we got into the lane and I took in a great deep breath of the delicious air, he said, " O Jenny, love me more than anything that you love," and stopped in the lane, took me in his arms and kissed me, and we leant tremblingly against each other. And I, " I only love other things so much because I love you, dear." Then we walked hand in hand silently, till we came to the top of a little hill, when he ran down, pulling me with him till we were both out of breath and laughing, and we sat down by the roadside among cow

parsley and speedwell, till we had got our breath again.

I remember every minute of that day—how we talked and talked as we walked, I not noticing where we were going, but deeply conscious of all the beauty, so strange and so especially lovely to me after the sea and the barren country just inland.

We came at last to a mill pond and to a stick planted in the bank. Here David leant down and pulled up a bottle of lemonade that he had let down into the cool water, and from under a bush he produced a basket full of sandwiches, eggs, cake and fruit, all wrapped up in cool leaves. Not far from the stream was a little copse, and here in the coolness, within sound of the stream, and on a carpet of dog's mercury we sat and ate and talked. I was very hungry after my early rising, and as I sat with David's arm round me, and he was stroking my hair, I soon began to feel sleepy, and when he saw that he made fun of me. It was a hot summer day, and even in the shade of the copse it was hot, and so David unfastened the first

few buttons of my blouse to let the air in on my throat, and then with dry leaves he made a place for me to lie, and took off my shoes and stockings. And I lay down in the little place he had made for me, and he sat down by me and, kissing my eyes shut, told me to go to sleep, and soon I was fast asleep. I don't know how long I slept, but I think not long. I was wakened by feeling his face near to mine, and when he saw my eyes opened he kissed my eyes and my mouth and my throat, and took my head between his hands and kissed me again and again, and I, putting my arms round him, drew him to my breast, and so we lay in each other's arms, with our hearts beating wildly together. And yet I can remember no desire for more than this; the new rapture of such an embrace contented us utterly. Then we walked through meadows and woods, and through a beautiful park, where I first learnt to distinguish trees. I remember the lime trees there and the beech, and it seems strange now that there was ever a time when I could not recognize the fine-textured

skinlike bark, and the set of the trunk and branches like human limbs, and the beautiful curve that the leafy branches make, like a hand opened for giving.

For tea we made a fire and boiled a kettle. It was the first time we had had a whole day together; the first time we had eaten out of doors together; picnics had been very rare treats in my towny childhood, and this seemed to me the height of happiness. My surprise and joy and excitement in it all were as wonderful to David as the whole adventure was to me.

At dusk I went. He saw me off in the train, and that day ended, and we did not see each other again for many months.

During this time David was working for his examination, but very half-heartedly, for he hated the idea of an office life. He had very much wanted to go to Oxford, but the idea was not encouraged by his parents, partly on account of the expense and partly because his father thought that university life would encourage David in his desire to earn his living by writing, which his father well

knew would never lead to a fortune, while fame never entered his mind as a possibility. My father's influence had, of course, been on the side of a literary career, and so David's work for the higher branch of the Civil Service was very much against the grain. About this time his first book was published. He had, during his long walks at all times of the year, kept a minute diary of natural events—birds'-nesting, flowers opening, and descriptions of the sky, and clouds and atmosphere, and all sorts of observations made from day to day. This diary he offered on my father's advice to a firm which accepted it. I shall never forget my pride and joy when my copy of the book arrived, and how, in spite of my shyness in speaking to my employers of my own affairs, I rushed up to Mrs. Hayward to show her the book written by my lover and dedicated to my father. Mrs. Hayward admired my father's work, and the incident led to my telling her about David, and after that I had an interested and sympathetic friend in her.

Soon after this I left Broadstairs. My

mother said she wanted me at home, and I did stay at home with her for a little while; but the old antagonism sprang up and I could not endure it for long. I very soon got another post as governess with a Mr. and Mrs. Scott, so that I should not be dependent on her.

She tried again to make me give up David, and forbade me to see him; so he could not come to the house. I lived at home, paying mother for my keep. Each evening David and I met, generally on Wandsworth Common, where afar off I would recognize him by his long swinging stride, even though with my short sight I could distinguish nothing else about him. Sometimes on these evenings he would just walk with me as far as my gate, but sometimes we would go to Wimbledon Common. It was on one of these summer evenings we had been talking of Richard Jefferies and his love for the human body. We had just read his essay, "Nature in the Louvre" and his description of the "Venus Accroupi," which he had admired so much. We were sitting in

the undergrowth of a little copse in a remote part of the common. David had said that he had never seen a woman's body, and I do not remember quite how it came about, but I quite naturally and simply, without any feeling of shyness, knelt up in our secret bower and undid my clothes, and let them fall about my knees so that to the knees I was naked. I knew my body was pretty: my breasts were firm and round and neither too small nor too large, and my neck and shoulders made a pleasant line, and my arms were rounded and white, and though my hips were small, the line of the waist was lovely. I was proud of my body, and took the most innocent pleasure in its lines and health and strength. So we knelt in the grass and dead leaves of the copse opposite to each other, he silent and I laughing with joy to feel the air on my skin, and to see his enraptured gaze. For as he knelt he gazed wonderstruck and almost adoring, quite still, quite silent, looking now and then into my eyes with serious ecstatic look, his eyes full of tenderness and love, searching mine

for any sign of regret or shyness. He did not touch me, but just knelt there letting his eyes take their fill of the beauty that was filling his soul with delight. When, without a word, I lifted my clothes about me, he helping me, he only then said, " Jenny, I did not know there was such beauty."

He told me as we walked home that no statue or picture of a nude woman had ever given him a true idea, and that it was a far more beautiful thing than he had thought. For though he loved the Greek statues, it seemed to him that my body was far lovelier. But that was only because a warm and living thing has beauty which a stone representation of the most perfect body can never have.

We were still very ignorant of sex, and only knew in a vague way through the reading of poetry how the human sexual act was performed. I remember very well with what joy I realized that his head would be on my breast, and I would enfold him in my arms.

After that, often when we were in remote

places, I undressed and lay in the long grass, often beside the infant Wandle, then still an unpolluted stream. I had always from childhood had a love of feeling the air and sun on my body, and now—to be able often to have that experience and added to it the joy of my lover's delight—my heart was full indeed. He did not undress—at this time being shy—because he said his body would look so ugly beside mine, but he used to lie by me with one arm supporting his head while he read to me, the other over me, his hand wandering over my body as he read till it knew the curves as well as his eyes.

Desire had become more conscious and definite, and often in my breast I would experience a pleasurable pain of longing for I knew not what; I loved to feel his hand caressing me. After such a time he would help me to dress, kissing me as he did so, and I half-ashamed of his too great admiration, and wishing I was indeed all that he thought I was—wishing that I had perfect sight, wishing that my hair was not so straight and my nose was straighter, wishing that I

could match his intellect and spirit, wishing that I had more to give him, and longing to give him all. But in spite of all that I knew to be imperfect in me I was utterly happy in his love, and hoped that in his heart he created beauty where none was, out of his love for me.

During these stolen hours we sometimes used to go to his home and read aloud, and sometimes we would go into town to the British Museum or the National Gallery, with Ruskin dictating our taste sometimes, and we finding it for ourselves too. Sometimes we would haunt Booksellers' Row—that queer little back street that used to lie behind the Strand—and spend a shilling or two on a second-hand copy of some book we wanted, or having saved up would buy a new volume of Ruskin in a good edition, of Shelley or Keats. Often we had no money, and could only turn the books over, and if we saw one we wanted hope that it would be there next time we came. Sometimes we would walk all the way home, along the Embankment and over Battersea Bridge

and home through Clapham Junction. Or we would walk to Hampstead and look at Keats's house, and walk on the heath where David would be sure to find some unexpected wild flower, or hear a bird he did not think to hear there, or notice some beautiful effect of clouds or of smoke against the blue sky. All of this was a new aspect of life to me; for my eye readily caught the beauty of a group of red roofs, and the iron work of an old entrance gate, or the bend of a street of tall dignified houses, but nature was a sealed book to me until David taught me to see with new eyes and hear with new ears. And often I used to escape from home in the evening and go for little walks with him to fields and lanes whose existence so near home I had not dreamed of, and we would talk of life, and books, and love, and nature, and ourselves, and sometimes there was no need for talk—silence satisfied us more.

All this time he was working for his Civil Service examination, and I was going to and from my work. I liked my work, which was the care of an interesting little boy of four.

His parents were foreigners, and the father a Russian aristocrat, fierce and cruel and tyrannous, and his mother was a most lovable Austrian. She and I became, while I worked for her, great friends. They lived in a luxurious suite of rooms at the Hotel Metropole. Sometimes I would be allowed to bring the little boy home, and then David would meet us, and we would go for a walk, he carrying the child on his shoulders, who would delight his mother on his return with the bunches of wild flowers which she and he would arrange in cups and saucers, there being no suitable vases in their grand rooms for such simple nosegays. They left England quite suddenly, making me promise I would return to them when they came back. I promised, for I loved the mother and little boy very much, but the man I hated, and he never paid me about £20 he owed me. So I got another job, this time a resident post in a very pleasant suburb of London. Here I was fairly well paid, and my work was light, still with children. David and I wrote to each other every day, and of

course on my fixed free times we met. But I felt terribly lonely there, and the week which elapsed between our meetings seemed endless. The child was spoilt and difficult, and the mother an irritable, nervous, highly-strung creature, with a cigarette always in her mouth.

I felt a failure here, and that and my loneliness made me very unhappy. Mrs. Scott noticed, I suppose, that I was not happy, and very kindly questioned me about myself. So I told her about David, and she at once said that if I liked he could come and spend two evenings a week with me there in the room at the top of the house, which was the nursery during the day and my sitting-room at night. This made all the difference to me, and with increased happiness I could tackle my work better, and very soon the child and I were on the best of terms, and his parents congratulated me on the improvement in him. Affection and praise and encouragement were always to my soul what food is to the body, and in the atmosphere now so happy I know I was at

my best, and no employers could have had a more devoted servant. It was my delight to take the child as far out into the country as I could in the time. We went—he in his pram—to Barnes Common and Richmond Park, and there I would tell him all my newly-acquired knowledge of birds and trees and flowers. Sometimes we would go in the other direction, along the towpath to Isleworth, and bring home bunches of meadowsweet and loosestrife. Mrs. Scott was delighted that her child got taken to these places, and the child and I were never so happy as when picking bunches of flowers, or peering into gorse bushes for nests.

David used to come at about eight o'clock in the evening and stay till nine-thirty, and once a week I had the afternoon and evening free. Whenever the weather was good enough—and it had to be very bad to stop us—we used to walk on Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park, and go either to his home or mine for tea, for now my mother tolerated his presence. David was hating more and more the idea of the Civil Service

as a means of earning his living, and at about this time, greatly to his father's anger, he gave up the work, and decided to try and earn his living by writing. Several of the literary weeklies were taking his essays, and his book had had a fair sale. His father, naturally enough, hated the precariousness of this way of living, and after a lot of discussion it was decided that David should go to Oxford, which his father thought would be a good start for any career that he took up. He decided to enter for a history scholarship, and as he had now left school some time, this required a good deal of reading. He liked the idea of going to the university, but dreaded it too, for he had had so very little social life and was so unused to meeting his fellows; and also the thought of the separation from me was hateful to think of.

We had often spoken of our life together, and had made great plans for the education of our children. We hated the thought of a legal contract. We felt our love was all the bond that there ought to be, and that if that

failed it was immoral to be bound together. We wanted our union to be free and spontaneous. We had no idea when it should take place, but the thought of our approaching separation heightened our desire to be united in body as we were in heart and spirit.

My twentieth birthday drew near, and I was to have a whole holiday, which David and I were to spend on our favourite Wimbledon Common. We were to picnic there for lunch and tea, and go home to a birthday dinner in the evening. It was July and glorious weather. I had made myself a very pretty white frock, embroidered in flame-coloured silk. I wore a shady hat trimmed with the same colour. It suited me, and I know I looked as pretty as it was possible for me to look. I remember Mr. Scott's saying as I went out, "Why, Jenny, you look like a bride going to meet her bridegroom," and I remember blushing and feeling a great wave of passionate joy surging up in me, and I could hardly help laughing back at him, "I am, I am!" I was to bring the lunch, and David the tea, and I bought fruit and

sandwiches and biscuits and some of our favourite Gruyère cheese and half a bottle of wine.

We met in the horrid, dark tunnel at Clapham Junction Station. He was there waiting for me, so tall, so distinguished from other men, dressed as always with a sort of carelessness that was not at all untidy, but just easy and individual. He was in his person scrupulously careful, and his large hands, which he used so well in all sorts of work, were always well kept. No lover could have pleased the eye more, no girl have been prouder of her man than I of mine, and the wonder of his loving me never left me. Our hearts were beating so, and our joy so intense, we could not speak, but just in that crowded place pressed each other's hands and walked side by side.

It did not take us long to get to the Common. In the solitude there we walked hand in hand, or David with his arm round my waist, and I with my hand over his hand, whose pressure under my breast made my whole body tender with desire. Our

souls spreading their wings enfolded us in such dreamlike happiness that nothing disturbed our calm and our utter satisfaction. We talked as we sauntered along of what I should do while he was at Oxford, of our life together when he left, of my longing for children, of his ambitions in literature; and in this talk as in many others there was often hinted that deep spiritual unrest, which as yet we did not recognize, much less realize how it was to overshadow so much of his life and mine. All the beauty of the earth, the grass, the flaming gorse, the lark's song, the high cloudlets, the sweet air laden with the honey smell of gorse, seemed to be a part of our love. We could not speak of it, but as we stood to watch a bumble-bee make the gorse flower deliver its secret to him, he standing a little behind me, with his hands over my breasts, drew me to him and kissed me where my hair grew soft and curly under my ear. So I leaned smiling up at him, and he solemnly looking down at me, his eyes half-closed, his lovely mouth trembling from the kiss. So on, walking

with hips moving together, laughing because of my short step and his long one. He picked a little bunch of flowers in the grass, white clover, yellow bedstraw and milkwort, and then remembered he had a birthday present for me. It was a brooch made of gold wire, twisted into a Celtic pattern, and when I had put my arms round his neck and kissed him for it, he pinned the flowers into the opening of my dress, which first he opened a little more to kiss the warm, soft swell of my breast, and while he kissed me I pressed his head yet further down into the warmth and sweetness there.

So we walked on into the remote part of the Common among the trees, until we came to a beautiful little pool, where moorhens and coots lived in the reeds, and where water voles dipped out of their holes in the low bank into the water, making a sound like cream being stirred. Here we sat and paddled our feet in the water and ate our lunch. We were so quiet that the timid water creatures grew bold and birds skimmed over the water, and a flaming dragon-fly

darted in the air round and round us, as if weaving us in a web of rainbow colours. As we sat, David read to me some of the old ballads, "Edom O'Gordon" and "Chevy Chase" and "Sir Partick Spens," he leaning against a beech tree and I leaning in the crook of his arm and shoulder, listening to his deep, clear voice, so quiet, so vibrating, so tender. I was caught up into heaven; all beauty, all love, all content was mine. Life gave me all it had to give. As I lay there in the bend of his arm, in the silence that the splash of the voles, and the song of the lark, and the sound of his voice did not disturb, the beating of his heart under my cheek lulled me to sleep, and my eyes were only opened by his kisses. He kissed my eyes, and my funny nose and my mouth and neck and my hands and feet. But I laughed at his serious kisses and pushed him away, and before he knew what I meant to do I had run away and hidden in a thicket of hazel and beech, and crouched down in the dry leaves. I heard his step rustling in the leaves, and I waited, trembling half with

fear of his finding me, and half afraid I had hidden myself too well. But he came upon me before I knew he was near, and caught me up in his arms and carried me further and further into the little copse. I lay inert in his arms, conscious of nothing but his beating heart. Soon he came to a little glade in the copse, leafy and mossy and sunny, and putting me down, knelt in front of me and undid my hair, but finding it fell over my face he picked a trail of white bryony and made a fillet of it to keep my hair back. Then, keeping his eyes fixed so tenderly and seriously and passionately on mine, he undid my dress and took my arms out of the sleeves, and unfastened my underclothes, and slipped the shoulder-straps over my arms, so that I was naked to the waist, with my clothes lying round me. Then I held out my hands to him—for he was standing now, and he raised me to my feet, so that my clothes slid down in a ring. I stepped out of them on to the soft moss and dry leaves, and he kissed me and laid me down on the moss, and I lay with my eyes closed, hear-

ing his voice speaking some passionate name. And I opened my eyes and saw him standing there and said "Come," and drew him to my breast.

I only remember vaguely that the birthday dinner at home was very jolly and rollicking. My sisters were there, and my youngest sister's sweetheart—a man very much approved of by my mother and full of fun—and well-to-do and practical and a clever engineer. He was for ever scoring off me in some way, and tried to do the same with David, but he got as good as he gave, for David's wit was quick and penetrating, though he was not often moved to show it. We walked back over Wandsworth Common to Clapham Junction, talking at first happily enough of the books we should buy with the five pounds my mother had given me. I had seen, too, some old brass candlesticks, and a nice Morland print I had set my heart on buying him for his Oxford rooms. We kissed our good-night kiss on the dark Common, and David gave me to

wear for a wedding ring the beautiful old signet ring which he wore—a red stone set in a very delicately designed gold setting. It had belonged to his great-grandfather, a Spanish sea-captain.

III

DURING August I went away with the Scotts to Sandgate, and I got to know the country about there very well, taking the child long walks on to the chalk hills behind, and along the coast to Dymchurch, and other villages in the Marsh. I forget when it was that David went in for a scholarship at Balliol and did not get it, and went in for one at Lincoln and did. I think it was while I was at Sandgate. However, I know that he was very soon to go to Oxford, when at the end of six weeks at Sandgate without any holiday I was given a few quite unexpected days' leave. It was too good a chance to be missed, and all in a hurry we decided to go away somewhere together for a tiny honeymoon. For me it was simple, but David had to invent some tale of having to go to Oxford or something. He was very

eager to show me his beloved Wiltshire Downs, and so we decided to go to a little place he knew very well among the Downs just outside S——, and put up in the cottage of his old gamekeeper friend. All this we arranged in the greatest secrecy and joy. We took the train to S——, and from there walked, with our few belongings in rucksacks, the seven miles to the Downs. I shall never forget the wild excitement we felt at being all alone and free—no one knowing where we were, our time all our own. There was a little risk too that added to our enjoyment, for David's grandmother and aunt lived at S——, and he had often stayed with them, and was well known by quite a number of people. But we risked that, walking quickly through the town until we came to the solitary country road leading through a cleft in the Downs.

I do not remember the hamlet to which our cottage belonged, but of the cottage itself and its immediate surroundings I remember every detail. It stood like a fairy tale cottage right in a wood, and quite off

the road, a track from the lane taking you to it. It had a deep thatched roof almost hiding the little windows of the bedrooms with its deep eaves, and a porch with a little bench on each side, covered with traveller's joy and briar roses that filled the air with their musky scent. It belonged to the wood, and the wood to it, as if it had been in reality the brown fur-covered creature that it looked, whose eyes peered out from under its overhanging brows shyly and kindly. All along under the thick untrimmed hedge of the garden was a row of beehives, one or two of the painted wooden new kind, but half a dozen or more of the old-fashioned skeps with earthenware pans inverted over them. The garden was full of bees and of flowers for them, red and blue and yellow. I had never seen anything so lovely, so exactly what I should have chosen for my honeymoon. The old man was full of fun, and he and his old wife, who welcomed us as though we were her children, could not make enough jokes at our expense. They had an enormous tea ready for us, of

bacon and eggs and honey and lardy cakes and strong tea with cream in it, in the living-room of the cottage. This room had a flagged floor, with a big open range in it in which burned even at this time of the year a huge wood fire; the walls were covered with pictures and guns and traps. Bunches of herbs in paper bags hung from the raftered ceiling, for the old man was very proud of his herb medicines and ointments for men and beasts, and on a little table in the window, covered with a fox's skin, stood a huge Bible, and on the Bible a book in which he had written down all his prescriptions and remedies. He and David talked eagerly over old times of birds' nesting, and fishing in the huge reservoir near by. And there were jokes and nods and winks every now and then which we all laughed at. I was so glad they liked me, for they had known David since he was a little boy, and loved him, and I had felt afraid that I might not be the sort of girl they would like. But we got on splendidly. David sang some of the old songs in his clear deep voice, and then the old man sang

some that he knew, "The Farmer's Boy" and "Turmut Hoeing" and "The Seeds of Love," and we all joined in at the chorus. Just before bed-time the old woman brought out a bottle of mead, made from their own honey, I do not know how many years ago. It was like cloudy amber to look at, and had the softest, most subtle taste you can imagine. We drank it like a liqueur. It was very strong, and they were delighted that we liked it, and took it as a compliment that we dared not drink much of it—though they tried to make us, telling us it was a right proper drink for lovers. They told me I must call them Dad and Granny as David had always done, and they called me Mrs. Davy.

Our bedroom was just as right as all the rest of the cottage was—a small room almost filled by the four-poster, with such a thick mattress, and feather bed on it, covered with a patchwork quilt, that I had to climb on a chair before I could get into bed. The hangings of the bed were chintz in a pattern of the rose, the shamrock, and the thistle, all

in bright colours. There was a little dressing-table with a white dimity flounce all round it, and a little corner washstand. The tiny window was draped with dimity curtains, and the window was kept open by a large dried sunflower head. The scent of the briar rose over the porch mingled with the smell of lavender, of which there were two vases full on the dressing-table. Everything was enchanting; I had never been in such a cottage before. David was as happy as I, and overjoyed at my delight. It was so lovely, too, to be together like this. So little of our courtship and love-making had been indoors, and it was a delicious experience to be together in this sweet little room, all to ourselves, chatting and laughing together, unpacking our rucksacks, and finding places for our things all so intimate and homely. We washed in rain-water, and even the rough towel smelt sweet. Outside the owls hooted about the cottage, and bats twittered, and starlings stirred in the thatch. No other sound was to be heard, no trams, no people, no traffic, nothing but the sounds that do

not spoil silence, but rather deepen it, and a little breeze wandering through the wood, and a leaf flapping against our window.

As we stood together by the window sniffing the sweet air, and looking into the dark wood, David took the pins out of my hair, and when I was going to plait it into two plaits he said: " No, let it be loose." I got into bed first and sank down into the thick feather bed. All night we were to be together, and all day, and all day and all night again. I sighed a deep sigh of content and happiness. " Happy? " David asked, as he blew out the candle and got in beside me and took me in his arms.

David was awake early and, half-dressed, went down to the reservoir to bathe. As soon as he was gone, Granny came up with a huge cup of tea, and a tiny doll's loaf just out of the oven on a plate for me. While I sat up and ate and drank she stood talking to me about David, and her sons, and her young days; how Dad was a bit wild when he was young; and how she had had to work hard to keep things going, though many's

the time she and the children had sat down to a dish of boiled turnips and bread for their dinner, and not much bread either, for flour was dear. But though he had been a bit wild he had never been unkind to her and the boys, and as he got older he settled down, and they had been very happy ever since. She told me they loved David as much as their own boys, and showed me letters that they had had from him when he was a little boy, and a handkerchief, bought and chosen by himself, which David had sent her one Christmas many years ago. We were gossiping away when we heard David's step, and he called to me from the garden to come out. So Granny left me to get dressed saying, with a wink, " Drat the men, they never leave a poor woman in peace," and we laughed at the joke. But I knew that all my life my only peace would be to be needed by him. And so it was.

For there were to come dark days when his brooding melancholy shut me out in a lonely exile, and my heart waited too eagerly to be let into the light again. When those

days came, with no apparent reason for their coming, bringing to him a deep spiritual unrest and discontent, he would be silent for hours, and perhaps stride out of the house, angry and bitter and cruel, and walk and walk far into the night, and come home worn out with deadly fatigue. When those days came my heart trembled for what might happen, and I, suffering his terrible spiritual loneliness, had no thought, or seeing, or hearing, for anything but his agony and my own despair. Then my strong body that he loved so came to my rescue, and in hard housework, scrubbing and washing and digging in the garden, I would force myself to *be*, so that when the cloud left him he would find me to welcome him. I did these things mechanically—cooked the food, took the children out walks, spoke to them, picked flowers with them, but I did not know afterwards what I had done while my spirit waited in the dark.

But this was to come, and it was only now and then that I had hints of this darkness in his soul, this fierce unrest which beyond all

found peace in Nature, but not in me. Alone he had to be in his agony, but when he emerged from it, exhausted by God knows what bitter contest, he looked for me and needed me, and our love was always the firm ground on which we stood secure and that no storm ever swept away.

But now I washed and dressed and ran down, and as I ran through the kitchen where Granny was cooking the breakfast she shooed me away—"Get along, you hussy," she said.

All that day we were out, fishing in the reservoir, and bathing in it and walking in the deep woods, not talking much as I remember. We brought home some perch for supper, which Granny pretended to be cross with David for bringing—"Such trashy fish, all scales and guts," she said. But she cooked them, and while we ate them David read how Izaak Walton would have cooked them, to tease Granny with the white wine and this and that ungettable spice. When Dad came in he brought a dead jay so that I could have the beautiful wing for a hat. I didn't

like to think of the lovely bird being killed for such a purpose, but I kept that to myself, knowing it would be incomprehensible to him, and appreciating his kind thought for me. After tea Dad showed me the garden and the beehives, and all the bees swarming over the comb. They filled me with disgust. They are such ugly creatures in a mass like that, and their highly developed social life, so ordered, so cold, so lacking in impulse, repelled me then as it does now. Dad laughed when I tried to tell him how I felt about them. " Ah, but what about the mead and the honey? " he said, and, of course, I said, " Yes, I like that," but I could only regard bees almost as one does machinery. But I loved the hermit, home-making bumble bees—humble bees of the earth, primitive and indolent and beautiful.

While Dad and I had been flirting over the bees and flowers, and his collection of dried skins of ferret and weasel and rabbit and squirrel, David was helping Granny to wash up, much to her amusement and delight, and she had tied her long white apron

round him. At the end of our little round he said, "Now give your old Dad a kiss, but don't tell that boy of yourn, for I be no fighter these days." So I kissed him and promised I wouldn't tell, and we had our little secret; but Dad, with such winks and significant looks, soon let the cat out of the bag, and all had to be confessed. Then David had to kiss Granny to make it quits, and we were very happy together with our jokes and fun. I had never met people like these before, and though the things they said sometimes startled me because they were so new to me, their coarse, simple talk full of proverbs, and shrewd observation and wit did not shock me at all. I felt perfectly at home with them, and knew that they didn't feel they had to make a difference for me, but were with me as they had always been with David. He was glad too, I could see. I loved them just as I love the earth, and the rain, and the bumble bees.

After we had all had some mead, Dad and Granny got very jolly and gay, and Granny rose and began to dance and said,

"I be as young as any, b'aint I, Dad?" and Dad said of course she was, and they danced together hand-in-hand up and down the kitchen, Granny holding up her apron and Dad looking at her with admiration. And as they danced some old dance they had remembered from their courting days, David whistled the tune, for he was too shy to dance, and so was I. I wonder when again that lovely old tune was whistled in that cottage, and when again that jig was danced under that roof, for those who danced are dead, and he who whistled the tune is dead, and I think that those who live in that cottage now have forgotten these old things, as soon all will have forgotten them. So we lay another night in the great bed, and slept in each other's arms, slept the sound sleep that lovers sleep, so sound and yet so light that like a dream the consciousness of the other is always there—the only dream that enters the deep sleep of lovers.

After breakfast we had to leave, and Dad was already to go with us as far as the market-place in the town where he had

business. Dear old Granny had already for me a little neatly arranged posy of all the sweet-smelling flowers and herbs from the garden—an outside fringe of "old man" and for the middle a tight pink rosebud with a circle of mint. She said it was for us to smell in London and be reminded of them and the garden. As if I should ever forget them, though I have never seen them again! They insisted on our taking a pot of honey, and half a dozen of big apples and two great lardy cakes, and Granny gave me a length of fine crochet lace that she had made long ago, with much joking and looking sideways at David, and he pretending he didn't know what on earth she meant by all her hints. Dad gave David a little old book of receipts he had collected for food, for medicine for beast and man, for curing skins, and all sorts of things. All these with difficulty we packed into our rucksacks, and off we set, with Dad insisting on carrying our traps, and Granny waving to us from the gate.

And soon in the train we left the long line

of downs behind us, and were in London.

I have passed those downs since and have seen the places where we walked, and from the train have found, as David showed me how, the glint of the sun on the reservoir where we bathed. I have never stayed there again, but I know the place as I know no other. I have my jay's wing still. I never put it in a hat, but the lace I used again and again on my babies' clothes, and it has never worn out.

Then David went to Oxford, and I stayed on in my job. We wrote to each other every day, and his letters were full of his new life, and I could tell how he was enjoying the society of his fellows, and also the freedom from home rules which he experienced for the first time in his life. He had always been kept very short of money, and it was quite a new experience to have a small allowance to manage himself. Of course, he thought it would do much more than was possible. He loved beautiful things, and his own home was so devoid of beauty, and he at once went the way of, I suppose, most under-

graduates. He spent in his first year much more than he could afford on editions de luxe, pictures, and china. I was always on the look-out for odds and ends for his rooms —brass, and pewter, and bright cushions, and books all the time as I could afford. He now read Pater, and Oscar Wilde, and John Addington Symonds. It was the *Yellow Book* period, and he was very interested in the movement, though never carried away by it. I was rather repelled by it, though as I was young and healthy something in its breaking away from the old conventions appealed to me. I read *The Woman Who Did*, but having done likewise I was not impressed by it—it seemed to me a lot of fuss about nothing. I detested Aubrey Beardsley's drawings and loved Max Beerbohm's essays as they appeared in the *Yellow Book*. It was an interesting time to be growing up in, and David and I were both quick to respond to any new ideas in art and literature. But David was much more influenced by the old than the new, and I think *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and *Urn Burial*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Lear*

and *Macbeth*, and Keats and the Bible, to name a few, were the foundations of his taste. These were the books we read at the same time, and in our letters we wrote about them and about ourselves and our love and our future life together.

At this time I became an intimate of a circle of people living in Hammersmith. The centre of the circle was a friend of Mrs. Scott's, but it was through an old friend of mine that I was introduced to it—her name was Mrs. Halliday. They were artistic Bohemian people, young mostly, though Mrs. Halliday was not. She had three lovely daughters, the eldest about sixteen or seventeen when I first knew them. This household and their ways were a revelation to me. I loved their large spacious rooms with very little furniture in them, the polished floors bare except for a rug or two, and the almost bare walls; the absence of stuffy upholstery and curtains, and the simple beauty and comfort of everything delighted me. I had, of course, read William Morris and been very attracted by his ideas, but I had never

before seen a house decorated and furnished with his designs and in the way he advocated. The beauty of it delighted me, and I thought it the perfect setting for these people, with their freedom of manner and thought. The house was always full of men and women living in delightful freedom of intercourse —all people interested in some form of art from Church embroidery to acting. There was a poet who has since achieved fame, an actor who is at the top of the tree, a painter who is now an acknowledged master, and several notable craftsmen whose work is now known to connoisseurs. Folk songs were just being collected, and it was here I first heard these beautiful old songs being sung. They were eager, enthusiastic people, and I admired them immensely. I look back upon this household as having been—after David—the strongest influence in my life. It opened new windows for me on the social and artistic world, a world I was strangely unfamiliar with, and because they liked me I felt at ease with them and found pleasure in talking to them, and looked forward to

the discussions which took place in their beautiful drawing-room. There were no servants; but everyone, men and women, helped in the house, and everything ran smoothly.

I introduced David to these people, but he didn't get on with them. He was too reserved, and sat among them like some judging Sphinx. But I, being so much simpler, and so frankly admiring, was accepted at once. I was often there when David was at Oxford, a humble disciple of what seemed to me a higher ideal of freedom than I had ever imagined possible. David used to make fun of their serious cults of purity and freedom and nakedness, but I thought it very fine, and admired and loved them. They regarded no convention, and I did not see till later that their unconvention was almost as intolerant as my parents' convention. But they were kind and gracious people, and proved good friends to me when I needed friends, which I was soon to do.

I cannot quite remember how events hurried on, but I think the estrangement

between Mrs. Scott and Beatrice did not happen till David had been at Oxford some time, and I cannot remember individual vacations. Mrs. Scott disliked my going to Beatrice, and because I would go she became suspicious, and after a while I found that she had been reading David's letters to me. She never confessed that she had done this, and I could never prove it, but I gathered that she had discovered what our relationship was. So I asked the advice of Beatrice, who of course knew that David and I were lovers, and she advised me to leave, and offered me a post in her own household, which I gladly accepted. My duties were to do anything that wanted doing, and included cooking and housekeeping, as well as sewing and helping the children with their lessons. David did not wholly like this, but it had certain very great advantages. I was with friends, and as long as certain things were done I was free to come and go as I liked. David in his vacations spent a good deal of time here, and gradually got on better with the circle, who

welcomed him and found him an interesting and stimulating participator in their discussions about art and life. But though he got to know and like them better, and they him, something always kept them from becoming intimate. Here I had a very nice room of my own, half bedroom, half sitting-room, where David often spent the night with me. From here, too, we had many lovely days in the country, though we never had another chance to go to our honeymoon cottage, for the old couple had had to leave it, and had moved into the town, near the railway works which employed their son.

So here I lived a jolly Bohemian life, working hard, and liking and being liked by the people I mixed with. I would have done anything for Beatrice, and did, in fact, work very hard at anything that came along to be done. The eldest girl was on the stage —a very beautiful and very selfish girl, and I was the one person she had some consideration for. She knew how I admired her beauty, especially her lovely hair, which I used to brush for her, and my natural good temper

somehow softened her hard, spoilt heart. Her beauty was to bring her nothing but unhappiness, and I saw it coming, and so used to mother her, and she who was so imperious to her own mother used to be yielding to me.

All this time David was working fairly hard at Oxford, and rowing for his College, and experimenting in all sorts of experiences. He tried alcohol and opium, and used to write to me and tell me everything that he went through in these various phases. He was influenced by the æsthetic school, and his dress and taste in colour and design were all very much affected by that. He had made a large number of friends, many of whom he kept all his life. He had a wonderful capacity for friendship, and inspired love and admiration wherever he went. He exacted a great deal, and gave a great deal.

He was enjoying it all enormously, and this life helped to overcome his natural shyness and reserve. He never wore his heart on his sleeve, as I did, and people had to meet him more than half-way, but this they

always found worth doing. He was earning about £80 a year by writing. He became a more or less regular contributor to *The Speaker*, *The Academy*, and *The Literary World*, so that his life was very full. His style was at this time very much influenced by Pater, and he wrote, besides nature studies, romantic and imaginative essays in an ornate precious style which he afterwards dropped entirely. His writing was always full of a deep melancholy; even in his Oxford days this melancholy and spiritual disquietude were becoming more and more characteristic of his temperament.

He had been at Oxford two years, when, shortly after the end of the spring vacation, I found I was pregnant.

IV

It was May, and we had been in the country on the outskirts of London; and coming back that evening—by what secret sign I cannot tell—I knew what had happened to me. I did not tell David, because it was not by reason that I became aware of this, but by something deeper that my mind had no conscious part in. I realized that a calm, deep, secret joy had entered into my spirit. It was not an excited joy at first—for what had happened seemed to me natural and right—that, just as out of friendship had come love, so from love would come a child. It was as it could not help but be, and I felt content and happy with a sense of fulfilment.

David returned to Oxford, and in a week or two I wrote to tell him. He wrote to me anxiously to come to Oxford. My serenity

and complete acceptance seemed wonderful to him. He was anxious and troubled, and his letters were full of tender passion. All he wanted was for me to go to him, so that he could see for himself if indeed I was as happy and untroubled as over and over again I told him. So I went.

He met me at Oxford Station. We wanted to talk and be alone; so he did not take me through the city—which I saw for the first time many years afterwards when he was dead—but along by the canal, and on by the river. We walked several miles by the river, until we came to a wide meadow enclosed by thick high hedges now all in their spring green and white, and full of cowslips. Never before had I seen cowslips growing, and as I buried my face in their cool freshness and smelt their honey smell, and heard the bees humming in and out of the flowers, I felt my identification with the earth, which in its spring fulfilled itself with grass and cowslips and bees, as I with my baby fulfilled myself.

We sat in the shade of the hedge and eat

our lunch, which David had brought with him, and afterwards David picked bunches of cowslips and spilt them all over me, my hair, my shoulders, my lap, and pulled more and more to bury me with. His anxieties had gone, and as I lay in his arms he told me how he had never loved me so much as now; how he had feared he might see some tiny shadow of fear or reproach or anxiety that would be there, however much I tried to conceal it; how, when with my first kiss and look and word I had dispelled all his fears, the warmth of love and joy and passion rushed in where the coldness of fear had been.

We talked happily of what had come to us. We decided to tell no one but Beatrice. We were jealous of our secret, and I particularly did not want anyone else to share it just yet. We did not talk much of the future, or plan anything, except that David would try to increase his earnings by more regular work for the papers which were taking his things. I was happy with Beatrice and her household, and did not want to leave her yet. But now we both felt we must

be more together, though how it was to come about we did not know. But I was as calm and sure about that as about everything. Care and fear for the future had no place in my consciousness, and whenever fear and anxiety came to David I was able to soothe and reassure him. The months of which this was the beginning were for me especially lovely, because David needed and took from me what I had so much of to give him—a serenity rich and vital like the serenity of the earth. Very soon there came to me the full significance of maternity, and when during these months David was troubled, I had the strange experience which I expect most women have, who are in love, of an eternal tenderness as old and wise as the earth; almost a physical sensation of being big and strong to comfort and protect. He was my child, and I the ancient ageless mother in whose arms was unfailing comfort, and in her heart the deep wisdom of the earth.

I left in the early evening. For long, long afterwards, when I thought of Oxford, that

murmuring sea of green meadow grass with golden froth of cowslips came into my mind, with the thin strip of the Thames dividing it from the grey mist out of which the spires and towers and domes of the city rose.

David and I had not spoken of marriage. Indeed, it had not occurred to us. At about this time I came into possession of £250—all that remained of a considerable legacy left to each of my sisters and myself, which had been stolen by the trustee. The thing had just come to light, and the sum of £250 each was all that could be recovered. This seemed to me a great deal of money, and coming just then it was like a miracle. It removed any anxiety on that score. Not that I had felt any—nothing could disturb the deep serenity of my being—but I was glad for David's peace of mind that this money came then. My calm spirit was only equalled by a wonderful glow of physical well-being, and it was difficult for me to find even the hard work I had to do in Beatrice's house sufficient for my overflowing energy.

I noticed with joy my breasts growing larger and my body changing its shape.

During this time David came to London once or twice to see me, and now I used to try to imagine him a father—this tall, fair man, so young, so handsome, so grave, so elegant—tasting for the first time the freedom and pleasure of a university. He was going through the phase of being influenced in his tastes by Wilde and Pater, and this appeared in his dress, which was individual and scrupulous without being either freakish or dandified. Now, as always before and always after, his love for, and need of, nature was the same. Whenever he came, we spent the day out of London, he tenderly careful of me now, lifting me over gates we had to climb, and calling at farmhouses for glasses of milk. We talked of our baby and of our future life. He told me what to read—Chaucer and Shakespeare and Wordsworth. More's *Utopia* and Plato's *Republic*, I remember, I now read for the first time. I was to go to the National Gallery, and choose one or two satisfying pictures, and fill myself with

their beauty. But most of all, I was to go into the country as often as I could, and lie in the grass and look at the clouds, and become familiar with the life in the hedges and trees, and with the solitude and the silence. I read the books and enjoyed them, but I got tired of the pictures: I had in my heart always the picture of my lover, and I longed passionately for a boy like him. I remember at about this time feeling the first flutter of my baby in my womb. It was as if he spoke to me, and I was thrilled with joy and pleasure, with this intimate and direct communication between us. I loved to feel him striving within me.

On one of David's visits we decided to tell Beatrice. To my surprise and disappointment Beatrice, now as ever affectionately sympathetic and interested, strongly advised marriage. Perhaps she felt she had unduly influenced me against marriage, and she did not like having that responsibility. She put before us very wisely and carefully the argument for marriage. It was I who most

strongly opposed this; so she weighted her argument with reasons which she thought would most easily convince me. They did not convince me, but David was sure that Beatrice was right. When we went to bed I cried and cried, and distressed David very much, who had never seen such tears. He did all he could to comfort me with wise and tender talk, quietly insisting that our love was our own and that no one could interfere with it or spoil it but we ourselves, and telling me that free love was only an-another bondage, a new thought-out idea with no tradition of human wisdom behind it. After a while he kissed my wet eyes shut, and in the morning I woke happy and comforted.

All this time I was keeping in touch with my home, and I went to see my mother fairly often. I had now very little in common with my family, but though my sisters and I were in most things strangers to each other we always felt very strongly the tie of family affection.

There came to stay with Beatrice a great

friend of mine named Joan Hunter. She and I had grown up together and had been very intimate. She and her husband and David and I got on splendidly together, and they were also intimate with Beatrice. For convenience she and I shared the same room, and when we were undressing at night she noticed my altered figure, and I told her. To my great grief she was indignant and angry. And as we lay side by side in bed she said many hard and bitter things to me. Chiefly she accused me of deceit in having kept my relationship to David so secret even from her, my oldest friend. I was sorry she felt like that, but I could not feel I had done wrong in this. Next she drew a picture of what this would mean to my mother and sisters, and how our baby would suffer. In excited and angry words she called me selfish and self-indulgent. I was utterly overwhelmed by the torrent of her words. She seemed to want to hurt me, and I shrank from her, sobbing uncontrollably. She, noticing my movement away from her, said, " You see, you are ashamed. You know you have done

wrong." And I, in my violent and now hysterical sobbing, could only cry, "No, no, no." My body became so convulsed with my crying that she began to be alarmed and tried to calm me, telling me to think of the harm I might be doing the baby, and that she was my friend, and had only been saying what she thought was for my good. She put her arm round me to comfort me, and whether in doing so she felt my altered shape I do not know, but suddenly all was changed: from a scolding teacher she became a sweet friend again, full of love and sympathy and interest, and I, who responded so quickly to warmth and affection, pressed up to her, and soon we were talking of plans and baby clothes and names.

I can't remember this time very clearly—only that I was very happy among these kind people. One of the many frequenters of the house, an artist, had a house on Chiswick Mall, with a lovely old garden behind and a great spreading mulberry tree in it. Here a little company of friends used to gather—a poet, half-gipsy, whom I liked best;

a painter; an actor; and one of two craftsmen: and they would talk, and I would sit and sew and listen enraptured with their ideas and gaiety and enthusiasm. David came to this garden once or twice, and was one of the best of the talkers.

This artist had designed for me a beautiful dress, which Beatrice made for me. It was of my favourite flame colour, and was embroidered in blue, and the coat was lined with blue silk. She was a very clever dressmaker, and I was delighted with it, and kept it to surprise David with on our wedding day, which was now very near. We had very little money, for we were carefully hoarding the £250, and so we were glad to find a shop where we could buy a wedding ring for eight shillings.

In June we were married. Joan and her husband and one or two of our Hammersmith friends came to the registry office.

Very soon after this things became rather complicated. Beatrice's divorce was coming on, and she was giving up for a time the house in Hammersmith, and David and I

did not quite know what to do. Joan and her husband invited me to stay with them, and as it was David's vacation, during which he was reading hard, he stayed at home. The Hunters lived in a flat near the Crystal Palace, and there I went with my few belongings. I was very sorry indeed to leave Beatrice and the friends I had made there, and I believe they were sorry too. With some of them I kept in touch for many years, but others I did not see again. In their various ways they became well known, and I was glad when I saw their names in appreciative notices.

This visit to the Hunters was to be only temporary—I had quite other plans. I wanted more than anything to be out in the country, and with my little capital it seemed to be quite easy. David also desired this for me and himself, for we hoped that we should be able to be together in his vacations.

I had, years ago at Broadstairs, met a nurse who lived, I knew, at Esher. I had made friends with her, and she had said that if ever I had a baby she would be my nurse.

So to her I went. My idea was to take rooms in a cottage in Esher—which was then a pretty little village—and so be near her when my time came. Here David could come, and here when he was at Oxford I could occupy my time in reading and sewing and walking, and writing my daily letter to him. David and I went there one afternoon and met the nurse, who recommended us to just the rooms we wanted. The cottage had a clear view of the downs, and the two rooms were neat and clean and simple. The front door opened into the sitting-room, and the bedroom was above it. The rooms were real cottage rooms, not of the furnished-lodging type, and the woman was a nice motherly creature of about thirty-five, with one little boy. We took an instant liking to each other, and she was interested in our affairs, and quite willing for my baby to be born there.

David, though so reserved and quiet, always got on well with simple, natural people. I don't quite know what it was that attracted them to him: whether it was his

looks, or the quiet humour that these people always brought out in him—or whether it was the instinctive knowledge of his love for the earth, and those racy, natural qualities which are so near the earth—that made them feel at home with him at once. But there it was—we were soon chatting together in her kitchen, hung round with coloured prints of famous racehorses, for her husband was a stableman in the racing stables near by, and her little boy was destined to be a jockey. So we left mightily pleased with our day's work, and I all agog to move into my new home.

As yet neither David's people nor mine had any knowledge of our union, and I wished very much that they need not know till my baby was born. I knew that directly our secret was out all sorts of things would rush in and disturb the wonderful and happy calm, and this I dreaded. So far David and I had never had to explain or justify ourselves to anyone, and to each other there had been no thought of such a thing. What would be thought queer by others was just natural

and right for us. Our cottage woman took it all without comment or question; but I knew it would not be so with others. David would be blamed for my sake, I for his, and both for the baby's. Our affairs would all be put under the microscope and distorted, and all would at the best be " queer," and the worst wicked. I thought if we could only wait until my baby was born there would be nothing to discuss. Our parents would accept a living baby in a way they could not accept my being pregnant, and David a married undergraduate. They would fall into my living alone at Esher till David left Oxford the easier when I was firmly established there. A hint of all this had been given us by the Hunters, who thought the Esher scheme quite mad.

I had no reasons to bring to people in support of my desire for the country and the continuation of our blessed isolation from the jangle and confusion of family discussion, and so I was soon argued into acceptance. David who did not, could not, share my calm happiness, was eager to listen

to the advice of our friends as to what was best, the more so because dimly he perceived that I had withdrawn into an inner room of my spirit, into which no one, not even he, could enter. A cocoon had, as it were, spun itself about me, and secretly inside I waited. So all the more he felt things must be arranged for me and action taken. His parents were told, and his mother at once came over to see me, and could not have been kinder. She at once accepted me as her daughter, and though she regarded it all as a disaster she uttered no blame or reproach. I was very touched by her sad acceptance of it all, and her concern for me. As I had feared, she would not hear of my being alone at Esher, but insisted that I should come to live with them. I appreciated the kind consideration of this, but I was terribly disappointed that the Esher plan had to be abandoned. However, so it was, and it did not seem to matter. My sanctuary was still inviolate.

My own mother behaved very differently. We had always been antagonistic, and all I could feel during the scenes which took

place was sorrow that she should have had such an uncongenial daughter, and a certain relief that at last we knew without any reserves at all that we were strangers speaking different tongues. I wrote to my sisters. From the youngest I got a very sweet letter saying she had always hoped to be an aunt, and though disapproving, still warm and affectionate. This letter touched and pleased me very much.

So I again moved my home and went to live with the Townsends, in conditions the exact opposite to anything I had wanted. Only Mrs. Townsend's generous kindness, which even her deep reserve and sadness could not hide, made the prospect tolerable. I was reintroduced to David's brothers as their new sister. I helped in the house, though a big strong Welsh woman did not leave much to be done. The huge batches of bread and cakes that she baked every Friday amazed me, as did the huge joints of meat that were carved by their mother for the boys. I got on very well with them all, though the atmosphere was very uncon-

genial to me—Mr. Townsend, when not at his office, wrapt up in his studies, and quite unsympathetic towards his boys, who openly despised him; Mrs. Townsend, reserved and sad, suffering for lack of any social life, devoted to her boys, who were strangers to her. How different it was from my own home life before my father's death, so united, so jolly, so varied; or from Beatrice's household, where freedom and tolerance and sympathy overwhelmed the fierce Bohemianism. But I was well and happy. The chilling atmosphere of the house, created, I suppose, by the strange disharmony of everyone in it, could not chill me, though it was entirely foreign to me, and would have been painful to me had I not been irradiated by my love and my secret joy. The boys, after the first surprise and curiosity, accepted me, and were in their way fond of me, and I of them. They, with their rough ways, their comings and goings, no one knew where, their seeming indifference to their parents, the entire absence of communion even with each other, surprised and puzzled me. I helped with

huge piles of mending, and in the evening after the last meal, if Mr. Townsend was not going to a political meeting or a lecture, he and Mrs. Townsend and I would sit in the little sitting-room, and I would sew my baby clothes, and Mr. Townsend would read aloud. If he went out, Mrs. Townsend and I did not read, but talked together as intimately as it was possible with so shy and reserved a woman. I never really penetrated that reserve of hers; sometimes I thought I had, when my happiness overflowed and gave me courage to take her by storm, and kiss her and tease her, and tell her how pretty she was, for she still bore traces of having been a lovely girl. So I would, perhaps, be able to coax her out of her shell for a little while, but soon she would turn away with a sigh and shut me out again.

The day which she and I in our different ways looked forward to was the day David came back from Oxford. David and his mother understood and loved each other. He of all her sons was like her. He was like her in looks and temperament; for though

he needed and loved my impulsive and demonstrative nature, these qualities were foreign to him as they were to her. This reserve and melancholy grew as he grew. Now, overwhelmed by the high hopes and the passion of youth, I had no more than caught glimpses of it, but in after years it became at times a darkness about his soul which I could not enter, nor my love light.

While I was with the Townsends he came home for his vacation twice, but it is the December one that I particularly remember. Ann made a great doughy cake, I helping to knead the currants and sugar and butter into the dough; and I cleaned and polished our room at the top of the house. As the time got near for his arrival I sat down by the fire in the little old rocking-chair, with the kettle on the hob and the tea things ready, and even the slices of bread cut ready for the hot buttered toast. At last I heard his cab drive up, and the bang of the street door, and the murmur of voices for what seemed a long time, and then his step on the staircase—great steps taking two stairs each time.

For one panic-stricken moment I wondered would he realize that by now I was very big, and then he was in the room and I in his arms. Then with his old, lovely gesture he pushed the hair from my forehead and looked into my eyes and said, "Happy?" and I nodded, no words coming for my great happiness. Then we had tea, at which his mother joined us, afraid she was intruding though we insisted she was not. She did not know what to make of it when I told David I knew my baby was a boy—he kicked so—and David put his hand where he could feel him moving so strongly. I asked him if he had expected to see me so big, and he said, "No, not quite so large and proud—but it suits her, doesn't it, mother? and her face is still round and pink. I've got a present for you—I don't know what you'll do with it, but it has such a beautiful name, and looked so lovely in the shop, it reminded me of those cowslips—do you remember? I thought you could make something out of it—a little jacket for when you are in bed perhaps."

Then he showed me a length of crêpe de Chine. It was quite a new material then, and I had never handled it before. It was heavy and soft and rich, and in the folds it glowed deep golden. He held it against my face, and said it suited my dark brown hair and eyes. Mrs. Townsend was pleased and shocked at his extravagance, and sighed because life would not always be like that for us. I was delighted with the beautiful stuff, and thought I could never bear to cut it. But most of all I loved to think of David's going into the shop and buying this costly stuff for me because it reminded him of those cowslips.

Our life was very quiet and uneventful. We walked on the Common every day, and sometimes got as far as our beloved Wimbledon Common, for I still felt very well and active, and walking with him was my greatest pleasure. Indoors he had a good deal of reading and writing to do, for he had a certain amount of regular reviewing. While he worked, I sat in the little chair and sewed or read. But when I think of this time it is

chiefly those teas by the fire that I remember, and later, when David turned out the lamp, and the fire still glowed red, we lay in bed talking of our life together, and our baby, and David's work, until with his arm round me, and me holding his thumb tight in my fist, we fell asleep.

During this vacation I met one of David's Oxford friends. He was a Balliol scholar, and though very different, David and he became very friendly, and David wanted me to meet him. So we met in Hyde Park. He was a brilliant talker and experienced in things of which I had no knowledge. But I got on quite well with him, and he liked me, and we were all easy together. His cynicism disturbed me. Still I was so interested in people that I did not dislike him for it. I thought it strange for him to say things which I felt sure he did not feel. I had not heard this kind of talk before, and I was puzzled by it, taking it seriously, as I did everything. Humour I was familiar with, and could understand and enjoy, but this sharp, cold wit was different, and I had to learn to ap-

preciate that. To me he was kind and courteous, though I expect he was amused by my grave talk; and his evident affection and admiration of David quite won my heart, and David was well pleased with this, my first introduction to his Oxford friends.

Christmas passed and January came. I had nothing left to do. All my baby clothes were made and arranged neatly in the drawer, the cradle was covered with white muslin and made ready for its occupant, with frilled pillow and fleecy blankets and blue eiderdown. I could only wait, and began to wonder anxiously if my baby would be born before David had to return to Oxford. The serenity that nothing had been able to disturb during these nine months began to give way to impatience and a sort of excited activity. We still went for our daily walks, but indoors I could not now sit and read, but forever had to be arranging and rearranging the room and the baby's things in the drawer. My baby lay quiet, and I felt lonely. As before I had felt alone with my joy, so now I felt alone with this strange

excitement; but whereas before I had been content in my solitude, now my spirit as it were paced backwards and forwards, impatiently resentful of this loneliness which shut it in like a cage.

V

But I had not long to wait. The New Year was still quite new when one night I woke up and knew that at last my baby was making ready for his mysterious entrance into life. I held my breath and waited, for I was not quite sure what it was that had wakened me, and conveyed to me so surely that my time was come.

It came again—a small, sharp pain. For a little while I lay quite still, too moved by its significance to turn and speak to David by my side. I must be quiet awhile with my baby—he in the dark mystery of my body, and I in the dark mystery of my soul—our bond, and the breaking of that bond made manifest by the small, sharp pain that came again.

I felt his shape in my great belly, and

closed my eyes in the darkness, that in such double dark I might see him as I had so often seen him thus, turning and trying his strength, and beating against the tender wall of his prison. He did not strive now, but lay quiet and expectant under my wildly beating heart.

My breasts for days had been big with milk, which, running out and trickling over my body, made me laugh to think of his greediness. For by all that waste of milk I knew he would be a boy and greedy, and I was glad.

Again the sign.

My thoughts wandered happily to the night he was conceived. I remembered it was a warm, still evening in May, and the stars were very high and very small, and there was no moon. The air was full of the smell of Spring, the rich, cool, fresh Spring-earth and young foliage and flowers giving up their essence into the air. The birch trees and young oaks and hazels of the copse were full of birds, which woke and fluttered a bit and then slept again. We lay upon dog's

mercury and last year's beech leaves just shed. I remembered the walk back by the river to Hammersmith, and my secret that I could not speak of. In my mind I went over all the months of pregnancy that were now at an end. I had had nothing to disturb the tranquillity of my soul—no bodily distress, no fear, no weariness—happy in a strange solitude that I could share with no one, and was content not to share. I was so glad of my strong, proud body. My pretty breasts and my slim hips I saw losing their shapeliness, but the emotion I felt was one of joy, not fear.

I knew I must keep my body strong and healthy, so that it should not fail my baby in any way. This was the final consummation of my bridal.

I remembered all the sweet times during those months—my walks with David—the sewing times in the evening when he had read to me. I remembered that moment when I had felt first my baby's life stirring within me. Like a bird caught in the hand, he fluttered in my womb, and my heart,

filled with joy and wonder and love beating so near him, spoke to him secretly unutterable things. I remembered the times when I had arranged and refolded and busied myself needlessly with my baby's clothes. The cradle was ready, the basket, too, and the pile of white napkins. I wondered if I had everything he would need.

The sign again.

I woke David and told him. He kissed me sleepily, and drew me into the hollow of his arm, and we fell asleep till morning.

The morning came, a cold winter morning. I woke feeling as I used to when a child on my birthday morning, or on the morning when we were going away to the seaside. Something was going to happen that I had been counting up the days for. What was it? I had forgotten. But my baby had not slept: he was impatient to be out, and the sign was so sharp this time that it made me catch my breath. David was in his bath —I got hurried and flustered and called him to be quick and let me have mine, for the pain now was so sharp, and seemed so im-

patient that it excited and unnerved me. Everything before had been so slow, so calm; this was a new and unexpected note; I could not at once attune myself to it.

I bathed and dressed as quickly as I could, the pain speeding me with its insistence. My baby called me and I must hurry to him, but how? when? David, tying his tie at the mirror, saw my face reflected in it, and came and held me against him, and when I felt his body tremble my panic fled and I was calm again.

I ran downstairs to tell Mrs. Townsend, and met Ann, who disapproved of the bother of a confinement in the house; so all she said was, "Ye'll be worse afore ye be better." But I was not to be frightened out of my calm any more.

David had arranged that day—it was Sunday—to go for a long country walk with the Oxford friend I had met, and when he came I insisted that they should keep to their plan. So they went, sending a telegram to my nurse on the way. In a few hours she arrived, greatly to the surprise of David's

youngest brother, John, to whom his mother refused to tell the reason of the capped and aproned stranger who took no notice of him.

I remember standing at the door of our room and seeing it with a new vision—this attic reaching over the whole house, with a large old-fashioned fireplace with hobs at each side, on which a copper kettle always stood. It had a sloping roof, and a dormer window at each end. Half of it was David's study, and our sitting-room, where his books, his fishing-rods, his clay pipes and walking-sticks were kept, and where he wrote and read, and I had spent such happy hours sewing and reading and dreaming. The other half was our bedroom, with the big bed, the bow-fronted chest of drawers, the low rocking-chair, and the large semi-circular dressing-table with a muslin petticoat round it. On the floor was an old faded carpet that had once been gay with bunches of impossible flowers. In the study part was a huge arm-chair that we had bought for the Esher rooms, a replica of one that David

had at Oxford. On the mantelpiece were the brass candlesticks I had given him for his birthday, his tobacco jar, and a miniature of his mother as a young and beautiful girl. The pictures in the study were two old silhouettes of Welsh ancestors above the plain oak table, which served as a desk; a large photograph of the Venus Accroupi, which Richard Jefferies so much admired; an old rather ribald ballad, with a coloured picture at the top, which we used to sing to a jolly tune; and a funny old painting on glass of Tintern Abbey. In the bedroom part was a large coloured reproduction of Botticelli's Prima Vera, and his round Virgin and Child, and a water-colour drawing of my father.

I had always loved this room, and on that day every detail of it imprinted itself on my mind for ever. I was content that it should be the birth-room of my first-born.

On an oak chest which David had made, near to the fireplace, stood the cradle. Round the huge fire on a fireguard I hung a complete set of baby clothes to air. If I had been

laying an offering on the altar of my God, I could not have felt a deeper ecstasy than in that simple act. It was humbleness, pride, joy, wonder, tenderness and seriousness, combined into an overwhelming emotion, lifting my soul nearer truth than it had ever been before, or ever will be again. I cannot recall what I thought, but I believe in that moment I took on my motherhood.

The pain came fiercer and more often now, but I was full of restless energy. I went up and down stairs, and went down to lunch, and read aloud to John, who begged me to finish the chapter in *Treasure Island* I had begun the day before. Mrs. Townsend brought tea up to our room, and we had a sort of picnic round the fire, she and nurse talking of practical matters, but I was lost to all but my own excitement, which not even the pain could subdue. I must be doing, my soul was singing and free, my body must respond however foolishly. The fierceness of the pain stopped me in all I began; I had to hold on to anything stable, and when I looked at Mrs. Townsend's face I saw pity

there. But she could not speak of her feeling to me, and I was glad she could not.

I wanted to be alone with this fierce exultation of pain. My spirit sang in triumph after each paroxysm, but my body was like a dead weight on it. I only knew that my baby and I were struggling for him to be born. He could not go back to his quiet darkness. All was changed. He had begun his perilous journey to life—I must speed him and help him; keep him with all the strength of my body and all the strength of my desire for him, pressed forwards towards the light where his soul waited for him. I did not think this, but dimly perceived it was so.

I cling on to the bed, and feel that the pain is overwhelming me. I must not let it. Nurse comes to hold me. " No, don't touch me; go to the fire; I can smell the baby things scorching." So by trivial ways I try to keep in touch with reality. My few garments are unbearable I try to undress, but become confused as the waves of pain break over me, making consciousness more and more diffi-

cult to retain. But I will not let my spirit be drowned. I will not lose touch with my baby. I have a feeling that if I let go my hold on consciousness I shall be leaving him alone.

Nurse says a word of praise and encouragement, which gives me confidence in myself again. I shiver as I lie on the bed, but I use every ounce of effort and strength when the paroxysm comes, and feel again the triumphant exultation. My body labours, but my spirit is free. My baby and I are struggling to be rid of each other. That strange, secret link must be broken. He must be himself apart from me, and I must give him to mankind.

My body is seized by a new strangely expelling pain. I am again terribly alone—a primitive creature, without thought, without desire, without anything but this instinct to rid my womb of what encumbers it. I hear voices far away. I feel hands about me, but I am not I; I am only an elemental instinctive force bringing forth after its kind.

A pain more rending than all bears me on

its crest into utter darkness. A cry, a strange unearthly cry strikes piteously at my heart, and pierces my darkness. My consciousness strives towards that cry, my soul recognizes it. It is my baby's cry, and it leads my spirit away from the dark back to the light.

Someone says "A fine boy," and I, wearily, "Is he all right?" They say "A perfect child." Then blessed rest and content—not unconsciousness, but just a sense of fulfilment, with no remembrance of pain, nor even of the baby, who is silent.

They say "Here is your husband," and I hear them tell him I have been brave, and I hear his voice low and tender speaking to them or me—I do not know whom—I am too tired to listen, and when he bends over me to kiss me I cannot open my lips or my eyes for weariness. But I can smell the violets he puts on my pillow.

I don't know how long I lie like that, but after a while they give me my boy. I see he has David's fair hair and blue eyes, and I am glad; but his nose is small like mine; his ears are like his father's, and covered with

soft, fine down. His tiny fingers clasp my finger. His eyes are wide open: what does he see as he moves his head from side to side? The light of the winter dawn fills the room; his eyes unblinkingly seek the window, not with wonder as one coming from darkness, but as if in this strangeness the light alone is not strange

Suddenly the realization of life and of all that may separate us comes to me, and I hold him close. I want him still to be all my own. His eyes close, and he nuzzles against my breast, and with his groping mouth finds my nipple. He is soft and warm and sweet. As he draws the warm milk from me, and I feel that mysterious pleasure half spiritual, half physical, I realize that the link between us is imperishable. I am forever his mother and he my son.

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Edward Thomas

poet, essayist, and critic, who was killed in action fifty years ago at the Battle of Arras—A portrait tonight at 10.10

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